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The Norfolk

Natterjack

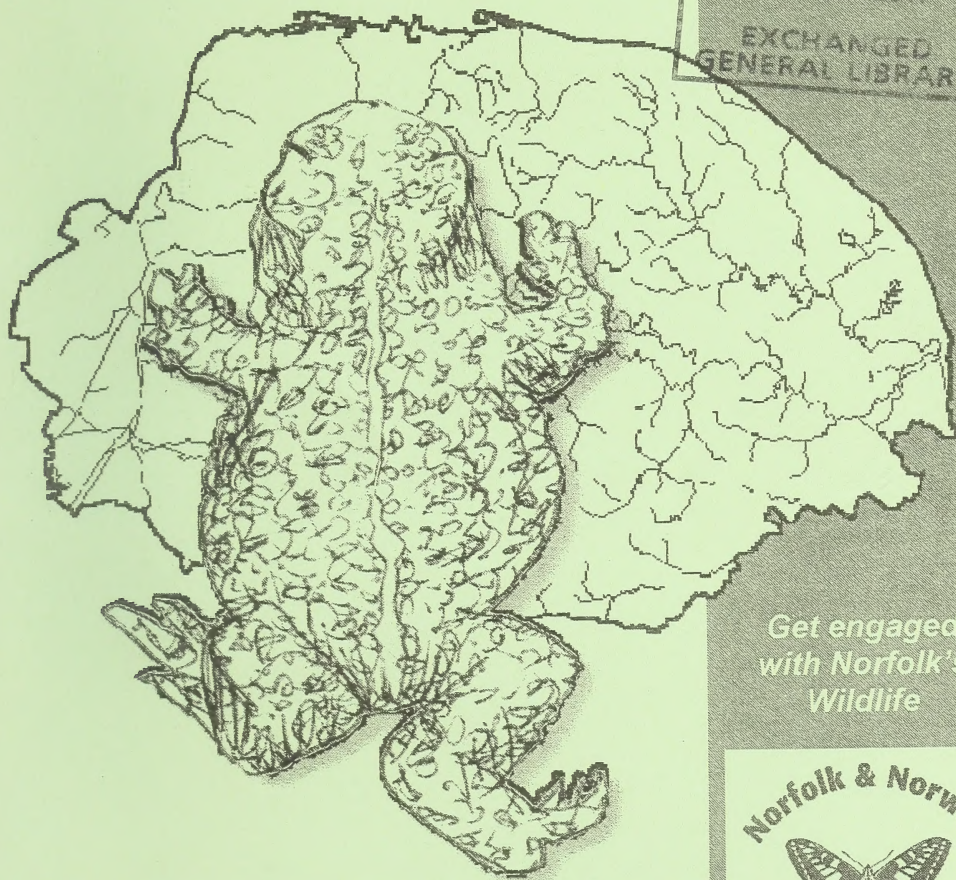
SPRING 2011

Number 112

THE NATURAL
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Naturalists' Society

The quarterly bulletin of the
Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

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Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

Founded 1869

Reg. Charity No. 291604

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Articles with the camera symbol have associated photographs in Nats' Gallery (centre pages)

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Toad-in-the-hole....

This is the first edition of '*Natterjack*' for 2011 and it has a slightly different look, mainly a new 'toad' and front cover design. The 'toad' arrived some years ago as a sketch on an envelope with an article from Godfrey J Curtis. As it is a mobile - almost 'running toad' I thought a hint of dynamic forward movement was in keeping with the various projects the Society is working on and the side panel reflects the new membership leaflet with its logo and strap line. My thanks as usual to all contributors and please all those members that haven't yet sent something make one late 'New Year's resolution' to send an item to '*Natterjack*' during the year.

FF

One of our *Oenothera's* is missing.

Colin Jacobs.

The Common Evening Primrose (*Oenothera biennis*) is just that - common. Well in Beccles, Suffolk where I live most of the plants are growing on private land fenced off from botanists. However, one plant was easily available to view during nature guiding trips around the town, it was growing in a flowerbed outside one of Beccles businesses. Each time I took a group or individual to the plant to show them the identification features it brought an office worker or two to the windows wondering no doubt what the attraction was. During the summer not one of these employees came out to speak to us but the looks gave me a clue that the staff were not particularly keen on the visitors. None actually spoke to us at all, just stared. In early October I was passing on the way to my allotment and saw a man pulling the plant up. I enquired as to why it was being destroyed and he replied "*The boss don't want people coming and looking at this plant anymore.*"

I knew there was some suspicion about us visiting the plant and I am afraid I thought it would be destroyed. Why does nature study, particularly botany attract those who are very suspicious of us looking at plants?

There are many "run in's" I have had with members of the public in my time but this is the first time a plant has been pulled up due to my visitations. The plant was on a public footpath and at no time was I on private land, so I don't know why the "boss" wanted it removed.

Itsy Bitsy Spider and Other Stories

Ian Johnson

So many people know next to nothing about spiders, myself included. Yet, as children, we were so very aware of them from stories, poems and nursery rhymes. Usually these reinforced a fear of spiders, as with "Little Miss Muffet." No wonder many children grew up with an irrational fear of them, especially the spider in the bath. A more positive message was the tale of Robert the Bruce in his cave, being encouraged to fight again by watching a spider try and try again, though there is no historical proof this ever happened.

Spiders figure very much in folk lore and myth all over the world. Even today we have superstitions. Any small spider may be considered a "money spider," bringing luck and even money if it crosses your right hand. Some say it must be twirled around the head three times, easier said than done. But it brings bad luck to kill spiders, hence "If you want to live and thrive, let a spider run alive." That's all very well, but put them outside carefully and they'll soon be back indoors and in the same place. How do they do it?

In taxonomy spiders are members of the class *Arachnida*, from the Greek word for spider. A mortal of the Greek myths was called Arachne, who fancied herself as a weaver and spinner, so much so that she challenged the goddess Athena to a contest. Bad move. Eventually Athena turned her into a spider, condemned to spin for eternity.

It is the intricate and beautiful web snares that spiders spin that we first think of. Yet many spiders do not spin webs to catch prey. One fairly common species of hunting spider is *Pisaura mirabilis*, featured in the latest *Norfolk Natterjack* bulletin, number 111. Yet it does spin a protective web for its young, over which it stands guard, hence its name of nursery web spider - see the photo taken at Buxton Heath, with the "spiderlings" clustered safely within.

Like many creatures and other spiders, males of this species offer food to the female to entice them to mate. It is well-accepted that some female spiders eat their mates, so courtship is a risky business. The males have to adopt extreme care, but are still not always able to survive the act of coupling. The internet is remarkable. I owe the following gems of information to "Wikipedia." Some males of *Pisaura mirabilis* have been observed pretending to be dead but still holding the food offering. When the females took it, they sprang to life and copulated. Bizarre as this behaviour is, research showed that this increased the success rate from 40% to 89%.

That is a remarkable success rate, undoubtedly much higher than offering a girl a box of the usual "Black magic." It is unlikely that feigning death while offering the choos would increase the chances to 89%, but you learn something new all the time on the world wide web (another spider allusion).

A bug to look out for in 2011

Francis Farrow



Last August (19/08/2010) I happened to spot a small red and black bug on a Marsh Thistle on Beeston Regis Common. The bug was like a slim shieldbug and had a very distinctive black pattern on a red background, which easily identified it as *Corizus hyoscyami*. It is a member of the Rhopalidae, a small family of bugs. I looked up the insect in various references and found that for the most part its range is given as the south coast in UK although more widespread on the continent. Later enquiries via the internet indicated that the bug was 'marching' north with records from Suffolk in recent years. In Holland the bug is known as the 'Cinnamon Bug' as when handled it gives off a scent similar to the spice.

I contacted other naturalists to see if they had any records and Geoff Nobes said that he had encountered it in his meadow at Cranwich on Meadow Cranesbill 20/07/2009 and also along rides in the Thetford Forest. Geoff also found the bug again in the Breckland rides and his garden on a thistle flower in August 2010. I have also heard via Tony Irwin that Dorothy Cheyne had a similar bug a few days earlier (08/08/2010). I contacted Dorothy and she has since told me that the bug was seen on a petunia in a basket hanging from an old apple tree at Ditchingham.

It seems that the bug is creeping over the boarder from Suffolk and has established itself in the Brecks for two years at least. I am not sure, however, whether the bug on Beeston is part of the general northward expansion or whether it is one that has come from across the North Sea. The map shows the records of this bug so far and it does seem a big leap from south Norfolk to the north Norfolk coast. If any of the bugs are spotted in 2011 please let Tony Irwin or myself know. (tony.irwin@norfolk.gov.uk / francis.f@virgin.net)



'Cyclopiian' Gatekeeper

Bernard Watts

I read the article in *Natterjack* no. 111 about the 'Cyclopiian' Gatekeeper. Although it had been circulated within Butterfly Conservation before, I had not looked carefully at it.

I think the reason for the absent spot is clear: there has been physical damage to the wing proximal to the eye-spot position. The effect of this on the wing-margin is clear and the effect on the venation in the region of the eye-spot position is also visible. Thus the insect, though interesting, is merely damaged! i.e. not an aberration in the usual sense. For such damage to have an effect on wing-pattern, it usually has to happen in the first day or so of pupation. If one looks carefully, one can see two small pale marks near the costa of each left-hand wing. When the wings were folded in the pupa these would presumable have been aligned. This suggests a wasp, say, pierced the pupa twice just after formation and probably

Birth of a local Natural History Society

Colin Jacobs

I was a member of a local Natural History Society for many years but left in 2005 as I was becoming so frustrated by the way the club was becoming so inactive, attracting non experts and what I call passive members that just would not take part in surveys or field work that it was actually making me ill. Well now I hope to redress the balance and take the Natural History Society back to how they should be by starting up the Beccles Natural History Society a club for active Naturalists only who have to prove through application to study, record and submit their sightings to the county recorders and birdwatchers, which have their own clubs, have been discouraged.

The Natural History Society should never be elitist but why join a cricket club if you don't know anything about cricket or play the game?

For the 21st Century we must keep the tradition of Natural History Society alive, Computers and the TV may suit the Armchair Naturalists but there is still much to see for the field Naturalist and a lot of work to be done.



Looking for Bees on Scabious

Nick Owens



Some of our solitary bees are oligolectic – they specialise on just a few species of flower. A couple of years ago I was delighted to find the beautiful *Andrena hattorfiana* on scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) in the Stanford Training Area (thanks to Tim Strudwick for identification). It has a dark cuticle with brown wings, contrasting with the bundles of bright pink scabious pollen collected on the hind legs. Scabious is its main pollen source.

In August I noticed large amounts of scabious growing close to Kelling Quags where the footpath skirts the edge of Weybourne Camp. So on the next hot day, with camera ready, I set off to look for *Andrena hattorfiana* – and there it was, busily feeding on scabious (see photo). Previous records in Norfolk have been confined to the Brecks and one site further east. The Weybourne sighting seems to be the most northerly national record for the species so far. Adding to the excitement I also found another scabious specialist, *Andrena marginata*. This *Andrena* has a bright orange abdomen, so is easy to recognise (again thanks to Tim for confirmation). This is the most northerly English record, though the species does also occur in parts of Scotland and Ireland.

Alongside the *Andrenas* on the scabious were two uncommon bumblebee species, the moss carder bee (*Bombus muscorum*) and male Barbut's cuckoo bee (*Bombus barbutellus*). Single moss carders turned up at Cley (David Richmond) and in my Weybourne garden in 2009. There seem to be small numbers hanging on along the coast in this area – good news for a threatened BAP species. Both male and worker moss carders were present in 2010. Barbut's cuckoo bumblebee invades the nests of the garden bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*). Two were seen – one on scabious and the other on greater knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*). This cuckoo bumblebee is thinly scattered in Norfolk, and perhaps overlooked. Males are larger than the rather similar four-coloured cuckoo bumblebee (*Bombus sylvestris*) – also present – and have a pure white tail without the dark tip and red hair tuft of *B. sylvestris* males. *B. sylvestris* (host: early bumblebee *Bombus pratorum*) is also an earlier species than *B. barbutellus*.

Lastly, also using scabious, were clusters of male *Halictus tumulorum* (provisional identification). The males of this solitary bee have yellow legs. Like the bumblebees they are polylectic, and were also feeding from perennial sow-thistle (*Sonchus arvensis*).



Lasius neglectus is a non-native invasive species which arrived in Britain in 2009. It is thought to originate from an area of Asia Minor or Turkey and has spread across Europe steadily for the last thirty years. In 2009 it was found at Hidcote Manor, nr. Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire and is now well established at this site. This ant looks like our common garden ant, *Lasius niger*, but its social organisation and behaviour is very different. It is a polygynous species with many queens and forms super-colonies, unlike our indigenous *Lasius* species with single queens and individual nests.

Lasius neglectus can withstand low temperatures so is well adapted to survive in Britain. On the continent it has been shown to be a threat to indigenous ant species and also to have an impact on other arthropods. Our own *Lasius niger* is likely to be severely impacted because they inhabit similar habitats. It can also become a menace by invading buildings and getting into electrical systems, which is how it was discovered at Hidcote Manor. Its spread is likely to be slower because the queens do not have a mating flight; they mate in the nest. However, this species probably arrived in pot plants, trees or soil from Europe. It could happen again and it could arrive in Norfolk sooner, rather than later.

Please be on the lookout for any unusual ant activity such as:

- hundreds of small brown ants climbing trees in urban or semi-urban areas
- hundreds of small brown ants getting into electrical equipment.

Send details to: Doreen Wells, County Ant Recorder.

Email: wells_doreen@hotmail.com.



WINTER SPECTACLE

Nick Elsey & Rubyna Sheikh

As we are definitely not twitchers, but do enjoy the spectacle of large gatherings of birds, we set off leisurely, on a beautiful sunny morning, into the east Norfolk area. Being a Saturday in mid December, it appeared that everyone else was involved in Christmas shopping and this allowed us to have the countryside to ourselves. It was our intention to head off to Breydon, but on seeing a good sized flock of Pink feet on the grazing marshes we decided to stop and enjoy the spectacle. This involved a three point turn on the A47 Acle Straight... not advised for the faint hearted. With about 2,500 geese in the foreground, a variety of wind-pumps in the distance and a clear blue sky as the perfect backdrop, we marvelled at how lucky we had been to come across such a sight so early in our day.

So now off to the original target of Breydon's south shore, where to our delight it was at a very high tide... something we always have trouble with predicting, even with the use of tide tables. Everything had been pushed up onto the lavender beds opposite us and we 'guesstimated' at a figure of about 5,000 Wigeon. Groups of Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit, Lapwing and Redshank helped to swell the numbers. Noticeably, there were no Little Egrets.

Starting to question our good fortune, we then headed up to Caister's northern beach where we were greeted by an enchanting flock of up to 100 Snow Buntings dancing along the drift line, with 40 Cormorants passing offshore. Two Grey Seals frolicked in the surf very close to the beach.

On reaching Horsey, near to Burnley Hall Farm, we recorded several Marsh Harriers hawking over the heavily grazed meadows. One exceptionally dark morph harrier tested us for a while, having no light markings whatsoever. Whilst finishing our packed lunch, there was suddenly a great explosion of sound as about 3,500 Pink feet rose as one from a field obscured from our vision. Jokingly, we said that we hadn't seen any Cranes. We spoke too soon, as two rose majestically and flew northwards into the distance.

Thinking that that was about enough excitement for one day we decided to head towards home as the sun began to set. It now seemed churlish not to call into the corvid roost at Buckenham and whilst getting lost en route we followed a stunning Barn Owl as it glided ahead of us up a country lane. The timing of our arrival could not have been better, as when we stopped on the side of the road, we were completely surrounded by thousands of Rooks and Jackdaws noisily gathering in the tops of the nearby trees. As the light faded there was a wall of noise as this

multitude swirled around gathering in size all the time, followed by the spectacle of thousands upon thousands of birds descending into the woods near to the church. The calling was so great that it sounded like a river rushing by. (We know that this flock has been estimated to be well in excess of 40,000.)

So in four and a half hours we estimated that we saw about 60,000 individual birds. The day turned out to be probably the best Christmas present ever and will be remembered long after all the wrapping paper etc has been discarded into the wheelie bin.

A Waxwing Winter

Hans Watson



I remember vividly my first encounter with Waxwings when I was a schoolboy, and although that was over 50 years ago, I still get a thrill whenever I see them. Nowadays, the fashion is to refer to them as Bohemian Waxwings, to distinguish them from the two other species of Waxwing. The winter of 2010/11 looks set to be a very good Waxwing winter following the early arrival in October, of large flocks from their Scandinavian homeland. Some of these flocks numbered between 300 and 500 birds, and by the end of October it was estimated that more than 2500 birds were present in Britain. The reason for this invasion is believed to be a combination of a very successful breeding season, and a poor berry crop on the Rowan trees in Scandinavia, causing the birds to travel south in search of food. Fortunately, the berry crop on Rowan and other berry bearing trees and shrubs in Britain has been exceptionally good in 2010, and should provide Waxwings and other berry eating birds with enough food in the worst winter months.

At Yarmouth a long staying group of Waxwings, reported to number 120 birds at its peak, attracted hundreds of viewers and photographers, who no doubt obtained hundreds of good photographs. As is their custom, the Waxwings spent much of their time resting in the tops of trees some distance from the Rowans that they mostly fed on, with odd birds sallying forth from the rest tree to catch passing flying insects. Occasionally the whole flock would make a quick raid on the Rowan trees for a frenzy of feeding. I understand that some people arriving to see them when they were not feeding on the berries, left, convinced that the birds had deserted the feeding site. As they left, they were probably watched by the Waxwings from their lofty resting place a hundred yards away.

For many years I wondered how a diet almost entirely of berries, could provide the energy to fly over the North Sea. However, tests show that Rowan berries contain sufficient fats, sugars and other essentials for the birds needs. More amazing

NATS' GALLERY: February 2011



The 'nursery web spider' *Pisaura mirabilis* with a nest of spiderlings. Buxton Heath, 16 July 1994. See article. Photo: Ian Johnson.



Left: A bug to watch for in 2011: *Corizus hyoscyami*, Beeston Common, 19 August 2010. See article. Photo: Francis Farrow. Below: The lettuce-like rosettes of *frillwort Fossombronia* sp., one of the highlights of the joint meeting with the Bryological Group at Cawston Heath. See article. Photo: Richard Fisk.





Hidden Treasures There is a burgeoning interest in the rich wildlife of the seas around Britain, and diving around the wreck off Weybourne produced the following images.

Photos: Ruth Sharratt.



Top to bottom:
Light-bulb Sea Squirt *Clavelina lepadiformis*;
sea slug *Coryphella* sp.;
Dahlia Anemone *Urticina felina*; **Common Lobster** *Homarus gammarus*.



Marine Conservation Society
www.mcsuk.org

Top to bottom:
Feathery hydroid & skeleton shrimps;
Volcano sponge *Haliclona viscosa*;
Common Starfish *Asterias rubens*; **Red Dead Men's Fingers** *Alcyonium glomeratum*;
Broad-leaved Hornwrack *Flustra foliacea*.





Four Mammals:

Swimming Grey
Squirrel, Harvest
Mouse, Brown
Hare and Water
Vole. See article.

Photos: Tony Howes.





Winter at Strumpshaw:
Roosting Starlings, great looks
at Bittern, an aquatic reed
cutter and an obliging Jack
Snipe. See article.
Photos: Brian Macfarlane.





Bohemian Waxwing

The winter of 2010-2011 has seen a major influx of this delightful bird of the boreal forests. The family Bombycillidae contains just three species - Bohemian, Cedar and Japanese Waxwings. In the summer their diet is largely made up of insects (especially mosquitoes and midges), but in the winter they switch to berries. See article. *Photos: Hans Watson.*

than a berry-fueled crossing of the North Sea, is the crossing of the North Atlantic by another species, the Cedar Waxwing, several of which have been recorded in Britain in recent years. Cedar Waxwings are slightly smaller than their Bohemian relatives, but lack the white and yellow markings on the wing, and also lack the chestnut under tail coverts. At least one Cedar Waxwing was found amongst a flock of Bohemian Waxwings, so it is always worth bearing this in mind if there have been prolonged westerly gales. However, finding a Cedar Waxwing is far less likely than winning the lottery.

Strumpshaw Diary

Brian Macfarlane

As I write this latest episode the outside temperature is minus 4 degrees. The cold weather has set in early as it did last year. This last month has seen many days where the water has been frozen all over the various wet areas.

In my last article I mentioned that the staff were about to cut swathes through the reed beds opposite the Fen hide. This happened and a lot of wildlife has been seen. Particularly the Chinese Water Deer, and Bitterns on the ground. A lot of work has been done round the reserve, improving the width of the dykes, and changing the profile of some of the banks. Just recently some of the reeds round the water in front of the Reception Hide have been tackled with an amphibious tractor. It cuts the reeds and lifts them out of the water to pile up for burning later. When the tractor was cutting immediately in front of the hide, Bitterns and Herons were in close attendance to catch the fish, and frogs that appeared when they were disturbed, giving wonderful close up views to the onlookers.

While in the Fen Hide I saw a Cormorant catch a huge Pike, and tried for a long time to swallow it. Eventually it gave up and let it sink out of sight. Another day I saw a Jack Snipe walking across the ice, which is very unusual to see them in the open. Good views of flying bitterns have regularly been seen, and there supposed to be a minimum of 5 birds. Seeing them on the ground is not so often, but I saw one outside the Reception hide where the reeds had just been cut the day before.

This last month has seen spectacular sighting of Starlings coming into roost every night. I estimate I have seen 15,000 plus on several occasions. They tend not to swirl around for long like we have seen on Television. They come in and drop straight into the reed bed. However, when a harrier or Sparrowhawk flies low over the resting birds, they will erupt into the air in their thousands giving a spectacular sight.

I have been chasing Waxwings, which have come over from Scandinavia in their

hundreds to feed on the berry harvest which has been exceptional this year. Apart from a few shots I obtained at Yarmouth, I have usually turned up at places where they have just flown off. By the time they come back two hours later it has usually been raining, or they just sit in the tops of trees not co-operating!

I go to Cley occasionally for a change of scenery, and was pleased to get good views of a Hen Harrier the last time I went. At this time of the year, in the now extreme cold period, I can recommend sitting in the visitors centre enjoying views of the wildlife in the warm. Not to mention a nice cup of tea and a fruit scone, making the viewing even more pleasurable!

Four Mammals

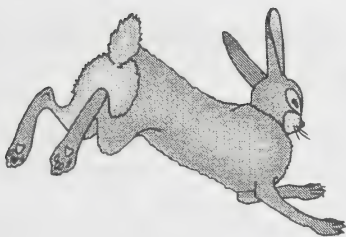
Tony Howes



Within the last few months my path has crossed that of four of different mammals. The first took place at the tower hide at Strumpshaw, I was watching various ducks and geese when something caught my eye over on the far side of the water. I only had the camera with me, and at first I thought it was a young Otter swimming towards me, as it got closer, coming right across the open water towards the hide, I changed my mind and thought Mink. It was only when this creature got much closer that I realised it was a Grey Squirrel, the tail was trailing out behind it perfectly dry, coots and ducks had no fear of it at all, several swimming up alongside to investigate, this was a first for me, I had never seen a swimming squirrel before.

The second of the four meetings again took place at Strumpshaw. While walking down the sand path towards the river I came across a Harvest Mouse climbing among the reeds, it was after various plant seeds growing among the reed stems, it stayed in view for about forty minutes. This was only the second time I had seen a wild Harvest Mouse in recent years, it was fascinating to see it use its prehensile tail as another leg, a wonderful experience.

Number three was a Brown Hare, spotted feeding out on the grazing marsh, again at Strumpshaw, I decided to stalk it and see how close I could get. It was within twenty yards when the penny dropped, and it took off, it went like a bullet, keeping low, - as it got into top gear the ears came up, it turned right, then right again as it came to two converging dykes, this brought it back towards me, but some distance away. I managed three shots with the camera as it went past, I like this image because all four feet are off the ground.



Number four, last but not least, was a Water Vole, this encounter took place at Whitlingham,, on a very cold day, indeed there was ice on the water. It was right out in the open feeding on water plants, and allowed a close approach, showing no fear of people walking close by. These lovely little mammals have had a rough time over the last several years, mainly due to Mink, but their fortunes seem to be changing for the better, our waterways would be much poorer without 'Mr Ratty', hearing that familiar 'Plop' as you walk a stream or dyke side is part of our heritage, I am very pleased to be seeing more of them.

The Mysterious Death of a Deer

John Vincent

A mystery becomes a mystery when an exhaustive string of possible explanations singly or collectively fail to crystallize into a solution at an acceptable level of probability.

So saying, Robert Maidstone (*Natterjack* No. 111) has rushed in with what he believes to be the explanation. Blinkered by his limited and macabre association with the small deer community within his sphere of operation, he sees a possible solution and is immediately dismissive of all other alternative possibilities.

Dangerous: Unscientific to say the least.

Analysing what Robert writes:

Road kill: not applicable at the location where the deer's remains were found

Illicit poaching: an obvious already considered possibility but not sufficiently likely, in particular in the area concerned.

And then he rambles off on other matters, which at least give an interesting minor insight into his scavenging eating habits.

Expanding a little on the human predation theme:

1. in the Edingtonthorpe area small deer are not considered to be a significant threat to farmers' crops. Farmers will pool their resources when their crops or livestock are significantly at risk and take necessary corrective measures, including lamping at night for rabbits and foxes in particular. But our farmers here are long established responsible people and would not shoot a small deer that got caught in the light;
2. illicit poaching of a tiny population of small deer scattered over open fields, day or night, is just not sufficiently rewarding to justify the risk;
3. If man was the instrument of this deer's death, the most likely cause would be a chance encounter, with a shotgun, in daylight. Again the location and vigilance of police (who regularly patrol the area as part of Bacton Gas Site security), farmers and the general public rules this out, especially if the kill was gutted and skinned on site close to public rights on way and housing.

Now permit me to add a further fact to all the possibilities and speculation arising.

On 02 June 2010 Christopher Coates, a life-time resident of Edingtonthorpe, now in his early 50's, and a neighbour with a keen interest in wildlife, was taking an evening stroll east along Rectory Road after posting a letter. Turning into the farmers' earth road leading to the Church (on the verge of which the deer's remains were discovered) he caught sight of a large black cat of panther size with a long, strong, short-close-furred non-bushy tail, ambling off the road and moving behind the roadside barns. Discretion dampening bravado, he turned back and nervously retraced his steps to the welcome security of his home.

So that is the present state of play, the mystery remains, and I still, on current known facts, retain an open mind.



"ATTENTION ALL YOU INVENTORS OUT THERE!"

Garth Coupland

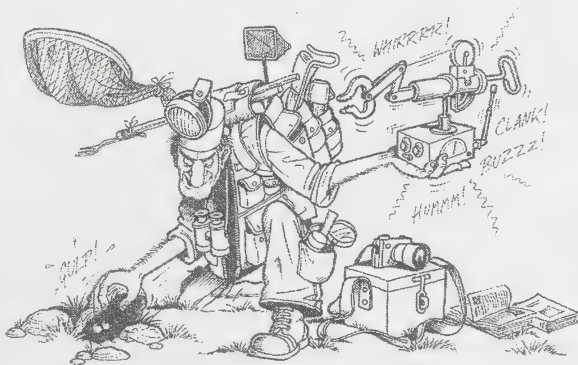
We Naturalists use a huge variety of equipment to help us with our studies of the Natural World.

The Society's Programme Committee are planning, if there appears to be enough interest, an event which may include a fun, competitive element, that would be centred around the showing and sharing of ideas concerning the equipment we use. Some of this equipment, particularly that which has been invented, home-made or adapted by Naturalists themselves will no doubt be bizarre, unique, funny, extraordinary and hopefully, above all, effective!

We thought that some of you may care to write about your equipment in this publication and maybe even illustrate it. To that end I will start the ball rolling, so to speak!

I appreciate that my ideas, inventions and adaptations may not be absolutely unique in their general use but are unique in that I created them. Take for example the HSSSS, my "Humane, Super, Secret, Spider Sweeper. This amazing creation needs to remain secret until the competition; otherwise I won't win! I will divulge this much: It is made from a hoop of supremely light but supremely strong metal with a bag of special, double-sided material of specific stiffness and staggering strength! Built in is a profoundly humane feature. Intrigued? Or how about the AMK, my Adapted, Mortician's Kit. This pocket sized, multi-functional item should be every Naturalists most indispensable possession! Or the NFFIH, the Nocturnal, Forest Floor, Illumination Hat! Or the Biblical sounding BLDPG, the Bringing Light to Dark Places Gizmo! Or the GPCAS, the Gas-powered, Container Adaptation System or the TFFI? The list goes on, as I am sure yours does.

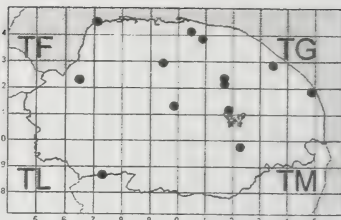
Let *Natterjack* know about your equipment. We don't want to steal your ideas, so just whet our appetites if you feel you can't share your secrets fully! I promise I will reveal all my secrets fully if enough interest is shown by others!



HARRY WAS SO EXCITED AT THE PROSPECT OF TRYING OUT HIS NEW Mk2-USNHHE!
(Mk2-Understone, Nuclear, Humane, Herp Extractor)

Reports

2010-11 Field
Meeting location
St. Andrew's Hall
Eaton
Indoor meetings



Cawston Heath



Joint Meeting with Bryological Group: Saturday 30th October 2010

On the last day of BST, nine people gathered at the small back car park on Cawston Heath to study bryophytes. There were two beginners and seven more experienced bryologists. It was decided to start with the heathland restoration area nearby, but although there were a number of heathland vascular plants the bryophytes were very small and somewhat smothered by the amount of grass. We were treated, however, to the sight of a large flock of Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*.

Picking up the tiny Common Threadwort *Cephaloziella divaricata* along the way, we moved off across the heath, in between the flowering Western Gorse *Ulex gallii*, recording and demonstrating a range of typical heathland bryophytes as we went. A stump covered in the bright green rosettes of Haircap *Pogonatum* species allowed the beginners a comparison between that and the commoner St Catherine's Moss *Atrichum undulatum* and various *Polytrichum* species. Without capsules it was impossible to be sure it was indeed Aloe Haircap *Pogonatum aloides*. Robin Stevenson, delving down a rabbit hole in terrier-like fashion, came up with Potato Bryum *Bryum bornholmense*, distinguished by its large orange tubers. Reaching the woodland edge we were, at last, able to point out some epiphytic species on an oak, including Lyell's Bristle-moss *Orthotrichum lyellii*, with its leaves covered in small brown gemmae. Skirting a pond, whose margin was denuded of bryophytes, we decided to stop in the sun for lunch. We weren't the only ones enjoying the sun. Common Darters *Sympetrum striolatum* circled the pond and even settled on Colin Dunster's hat! The lunch break gave us the opportunity to show the beginners some of the different field guides available for study. Just where we were sitting we found Bog Groove-moss *Aulocomium palustre* and the very undistinguished Kneiff's Feather-moss *Leptodictyum riparium*.

Immediately after lunch a small patch of the aptly named Big Shaggy-moss *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus* was spotted and nearby a plant of Hard Fern *Blechnum spicant*, which pleased Bob Ellis. Taking time to examine the liverworts growing on a steep bank, including Common Pouchwort *Calypogeia fissa*, before climbing up onto a track, we reached another small pond. Here Drumsticks *Aulocomium androgynum*, with its pom-pom like gemmae, growing on a rotting tree stump, let us compare it with its larger marsh 'cousin'. We swiftly followed the woodland ride in order to get to the next one km square, which Bob said was likely to be rewarding.

There was still time, however, to note the long stems of Waved Silk-moss *Plagiothecium undulatum* and to compare the typical heathland mosses Red-stemmed and Neat Feather-mosses *Pleurozium schreberi* and *Pseudoscleropodium purum*, colloquially known as 'Juicy Lucy'!

Almost immediately we were rewarded by a totally new range of tiny species on a dry bank beside the track. Scrabbling around on hands and knees we soon found the first thalloid liverwort of the day Common Crystalwort *Riccia sorocarpa*. The wire-like twisted leaves of a *Weissia* set us searching for capsules, as without them, it cannot be identified to species level. We were successful and it turned out to be Green-tufted Stubble-moss *W. controversa*. Even smaller was the Minute Earth-moss *Ephemerum minutissimum* with its tiny toothed leaves surrounding pinhead sized ripe capsules. In abundance on the bank were small lettuce-like rosettes of a Frillwort, displaying its orange spherical antheridia. Despite much searching we were unable to find any capsules, but further along the track we came across more fertile material and recorded both Common and Acid Frillworts *Fossombronia pusilla* and *F. wondraczekii*. These can only be identified microscopically by examining their spore patterning. Among the frillworts, Robin picked up Tumid Notchwort *Lophozia ventricosa*, a leafy liverwort, uncommon with us and distinguished by the green gemmae on its bilobed leaf tips. Another set of typical trackside mosses allowed us to examine the abundant bulbils in the leaf axils of Pale-fruited Thread-moss *Pohlia annotina* and we got a glimpse of the delicate glaucous-leaved Wahlenberg's Thread-moss *P. wahlenbergii*.

Feeling rather overcome by a surfeit of tiny bryophytes, we allowed ourselves to be distracted, first by Water-purslane *Lythrum portula* in the wet track ruts and then by troops of white branched fungi. Having consulted Bill Mitchell's conveniently to hand fungi guide, we decided we had Wrinkled Club *Clavulina rugosa*. Along side them grew Ivory Coral *Ramariopsis kunzei*. Crossing an area totally covered by Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca*, we returned to the car park, ticking off Sphagnum as we went.

In all, we had seen a wide range of mosses and liverworts of all shapes and sizes, including some uncommon species.



Mary Ghullam
Bryophyte Recorder
for East Norfolk

100 Years Ago from the *RHS* Transactions

THE GREAT AUK (*ALCA IMPENNIS*) AND ITS EGG, IN NORWICH MUSEUM

BY J. H. GURNEY, F.Z.S. *Read 31st January, 1911.*

THE history of the beautiful Great Auk's egg, which was presented last year to the Norwich Museum, and which is here figured, is, I regret to say, somewhat obscure, like that of so many others. The donor, Mr. James Reeve, bought it from Mr. J. H. Walter, whose father obtained it about the year 1850 from Dr. Pitman, and that is nearly all we know of it. The late Professor Newton was of opinion that this egg was one of those which came from Herr J. G. Brandt, the dealer at Hamburg, through whose hands so many these rarities are known to have passed. In 1856 John Wolley was told by Brandt that he had transmitted no fewer than fifteen Great Auk's eggs to England, besides others which he sold on the Continent, and that all of them came to him from Iceland through an agent, whose name was Siemsen. ('*Ootheca Wolleyana*,' vol. ii. p. 365.) Professor Newton told me that the egg now at Norwich is possibly the same egg marked in Herr Brandt's sale catalogue (No. 661) at the price of thirty shillings. Like all the other Great Auk's eggs which exist in collections, it has been blown in the old fashioned way by means of holes at the two extremities. That at the larger end measures .95 x 0.6, as Mr. F. Leney, who has measured it, informs me, and is neatly filled up with a piece of egg-shell belonging to some other species. It will be observed that the marbling of this egg is very rich, and having been kept from the light with great judgment, the shell is well preserved, and singularly little faded. Many of the dark spots upon it are exceedingly handsome, and some of the blotches of brown shade off with great delicacy into lighter ones.

The stuffed Great Auk which has long been the pride of our Museum, was formerly the property of Mr. Edward Lombe of Melton. near Norwich, whose daughter, Mrs. E. P. Clarke, presented it in 1873 to the Museum. Mr. Lombe obtained it from Mr. Benjamin Leadbeater, but in what year is not known, but in any case it was prior to 1822, which we are sure of, because John Hunt says in his '*British Birds*,' of which the third volume published at Norwich bears 1822 as its date, that his drawing was made from it whilst in Mr. Lombe's possession. Leadbeater was a bird-stuffer in Brewer Street, Golden Square, a Fellow of the Linnean Society, and man of considerable knowledge. It is probable that other Great Auks passed through his hands : he is known to have possessed at least one egg also.

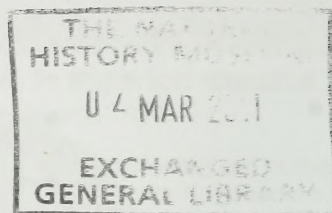
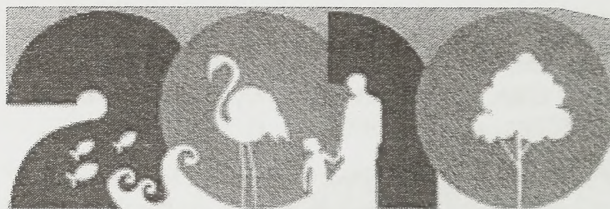
Although the Greak Auk was a well-known inhabitant of certain islands on the east coast of Canada, Iceland has furnished practically all the stuffed skins now existing in collections. Moreover, it was in Iceland that they held their ground longest, in spite of much unjustifiable persecution, the last known to have been killed there being two obtained in June 1844, on Eldey Island. These were sent to Copenhagen, where by the kindness of Professor Winge, I have had an opportunity of seeing preparations of their bodies in spirit, consisting of two hearts, the lungs, the windpipe, tongue, etc. The number of Great Auk's skins at present in existence is believed to reach to eighty, and considering the rough way in which most of them were prepared, they are still in wonderful preservation. Our bird has probably been stuffed seventy-five years yet it looks as fresh as if it had only been done seven, there can hardly be a finer example extant than that of which the City of Norwich is the fortunate possessor. (Vol. IX p. 214-215).



Great Auk egg



Great Auk



Tharston and Hapton Wildlife Initiative

Amy Buckingham

To celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity a wildlife initiative was organised for the joint parishes of Tharston and Hapton.

(see www.wildlife-initiative.org.uk)

Early in 2010 a bird box making morning was held which was a great success - we made thirty boxes which were put up in gardens all over the parish. By April Blue Tits had already moved into three of the boxes. During the year people recorded the wildlife that they had seen in their garden or while out walking ranging from Roe Deer to Goldcrests and including 9 biodiversity action plan species.

(The project should have been highlighted in 'Natterjack' last year but it was unfortunately missed out of an early edition due to its late arrival and then became 'lost' in my emails, however, as a community project it should be recognised so please visit the website to see how it got on - Ed)





The next issue of '*The Norfolk Natterjack*' will be May 2011.
Please send all articles and notes to the editor as soon as possible by

April 1st 2011 to the following address:

Francis Farrow, 'Heathlands', 6 Havelock Road, Sheringham,
Norfolk, NR26 8QD Email: francis.f@virgin.net

Please send **all photographic material** to:
Simon Harrap, 1 Norwich Road, Edgefield,
Melton Constable, Norfolk, NR22 2RP Email: harrap@onetel.net

Membership subscriptions

The N&NNS membership year runs from 1st April to 31st March.
During this time members will receive four copies of the quarterly
Natterjack newsletter, and annual copies of the Transactions of the
Society, and the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report.

Membership renewals are due on *1st April each year* and should be sent
to the treasurer:

- David Richmond, 42 Richmond Rise, Reepham, Norfolk, NR10 4LS.

New memberships should be sent to:

- David Paull, 8 Lindford Drive, Eaton, Norwich, NR4 6LT.

Current rates are £15 for individual, family and group memberships
(£25 for individuals living overseas).

Cheques payable to: Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.

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